

BOOK REVIEWS / RECENSIONI

a cura di Anna Meda e Gerhard van der Linde

Guglielmo Gorni, *Dante nella selva: il primo canto della Commedia. Lezione di poesia*, Nuova Pratiche Editrice, Parma, 1995. Lire 18.000.

In 1993 South African students and scholars were given a preview, in undergraduate lectures and an API Congress paper, of some of the interpretative issues which Gorni has now expanded in this *lettura dantesca* with a difference. It is appropriate that this work which draws from material presented in the New World should inaugurate another novelty – a series of studies of applied Literary Theory published by Pratiche of Parma.

Gorni's analysis is for the informed reader. It is in appearance only an exposition of the key issues of the first canto. It is, in fact, an itinerary through the entire *Comedy* with excursions into minor works, an examination of the intertext as well as of the semantics of the text itself. It operates by putting into relief the interweaving of implications, concordances and symmetries within the text, thereby enriching its meaning. At another level Gorni's study can be read as a critical history of Dante exegesis, of the methodologies so far applied to the *Comedy* and the results thus obtained. It is both scholarly and informative.

Gorni's *lezione* takes the form of a dialogue held post-prandially in the dark hours of the night between two scholars at the Collegio Borromeo of Pavia. The *Epilogo*, an interview between the professor and the editor of Pratiche, furnishes the metatextual justification for this *lezione di poesia*: the state of crisis in scholarship in Italy, symbolized appropriately by the morning mists which shroud that seat of learning which is Pavia.

Gorni first experimented on a smaller scale with the narrative framework technique in combination with textual criticism and its critical history in *Il Dante perduto. Storia vera di un falso* (Torino, Einaudi, 1994). In this recent study he has developed his undoubted narrative skills. He has refined the use of allusion and learned reminiscence, implication and analogy, startling and at the same time

entertaining the reader. What he has to say on Dante is valid and innovative and it is in this that the value of the work lies.

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